

TIMBER HARVESTING

As the main forest resource, wood is an ecological and renewable material that has multiple properties (thermal and acoustic insulation, etc.). A pre-condition for sustainable forest management is that, in the long term, timber harvesting does not exceed increase.

Capitalisation of standing volume

In 2011¹, the total volume of standing timber in Wallonia was estimated at 118 million m³, divided equally between public and private forests. Spruce accounted for 37% of this volume. Over the period 1981²-2011, a capitalisation of 27 million m³ was observed, coniferous and deciduous trees combined.

Reduced harvesting in public forests

Between 2002 and 2015, timber harvesting from public forests³ decreased. In 2015, 1.35 million m³ (5.6 m³/ha) were harvested, of which 56% was spruce, 13% beech and 11% oak.

Harvesting greater than the increase in trees

In Wallonia, over the period 2001⁴-2011, the harvested volumes represented 110% of the increase, which is higher than the equilibrium threshold. Compared to that of 15 OECD countries, the exploitation intensity of Walloon forest resources⁵ was one of the highest. With an exploitation rate of 110%, it is at the top of the rankings, followed by the Czech Republic (74%) and Germany (74%)⁶. For deciduous species as a whole, 66% of the increase was harvested, corresponding to a capitalisation. However for coniferous trees, the exploitation exceeded the growth volumes due to the intensive exploitation of spruce, for which the harvest

rate reached 150%. The high proportion of spruce in the current harvest is a consequence of massive plantations made by private owners between the 1950s and 1970s. These stands have now reached their exploitable age, and their harvest is also encouraged by the favourable price situation in recent years.

Decreasing capitalisation without compromising the balance

Management standards in public forests⁷ aim to reduce capitalisation by increasing thinning of deciduous and coniferous stands, and reducing the exploitability aspects of native oaks and beech. However, given that large areas of cleared spruce trees are not replanted with coniferous trees, or not reforested at all, the volumes of spruce trees sold should gradually decrease.

^[1] Data from the first 5 measurement campaigns (2008 - 2015) of the 2nd cycle of the Walloon Permanent Forest Resources Inventory (*Inventaire permanent des ressources forestières de Wallonie - IPRFW*) (2008-2028), for which 2011 is the central year | ^[2] Central year of the 1st Walloon Temporary Forest Resources Inventory (1980-1983) | ^[3] Forests owned by a public owner and therefore subject to the forest regime and managed by the Nature and Forests Department (DNF) | ^[4] Central year of the 1st cycle of measures of the IPRFW (1994-2008) | ^[5] Volume of timber harvested relative to the volume of wood produced by the forest | ^[6] OECD data over the period 1994-2015 (<http://stats.oecd.org/>) | ^[7] DNF Circulars No 2651, No 2656, No 2657

Fig. RES 5-1 Timber harvesting in public forests in Wallonia

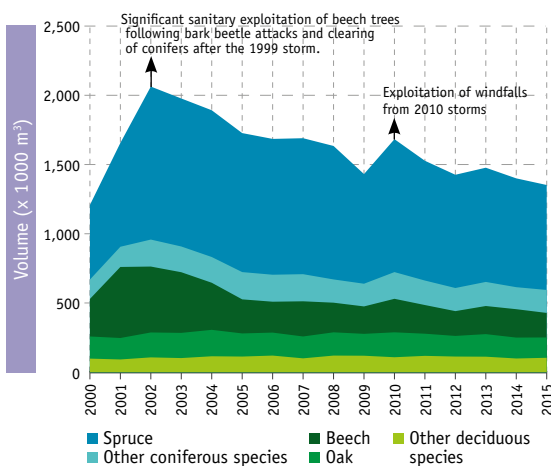


Fig. RES 5-2 Average annual timber harvesting rate in Wallonia (2001 - 2011)*, all types of owners combined

